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IS THERE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO SHOW, THAT
ST. JOHN DESIGNED TO DECLARE OR TO INTIMATE,
IN HIS GOSPEL, THAT THE SYNOPTISTS WERE MIS-
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LAST SUPPER KEPT THE JEWISH PASSOVER?

AMONG those who, of late years, have considered the question of the peculiar character of the Last Supper relatively to the Passover, no one, probably, has investigated it more thoroughly than the author of the latest written "Life of Christ." He has, after stating succinctly the opposite views of commentators, expressed his own opinion thus: "That the Last Supper was not, and was not intended to be, the actual Paschal meal," "but that by a perfectly natural identification, and one which would have been regarded as unimportant, the Last Supper, which was a *quasi Passover*, a *new and Christian Passover*, and one in which, as in its antitype, memories of joy and sorrow were strangely blended, got to be identified, even in the memory of the Synoptists, with the Jewish Passover, and that St. John silently but deliberately corrected this erroneous impression, which, even in his time, had come to be generally prevalent."

This hypothesis of error existing in the minds of the three Evangelists — error designed to be corrected by the fourth, himself assumed to be under no misapprehension — cannot, I think, be sustained, in view of the facts, on any sound principle of interpretation of the sacred word. He who accepts

the conclusion that expresses it must believe that all the Synoptists — one of them being an Apostle — who confessedly concur in representing the Last Supper to have been identical with the Paschal feast, related, as and for a fact, — a fact of deep interest to Christians — a fact involving a question whether a remarkable Jewish type was or was not accomplished in and by it, — *that which was not a fact*. He must believe, also, that, years after the Synoptists had given the erroneous statement to the world, St. John designed to place, and placed himself in direct conflict with another Apostle, and with St. Mark and St. Luke, in regard to a circumstance, of the existence or non-existence of which he and St. Matthew at least, — to say nothing of inspiration as affecting them all, — had exactly equal means of knowledge.

It will appear, presently, that, if St. John designed to correct the statements of the Synoptists, he did so with the fullest knowledge, derived from the most authentic source, that there was no error to be corrected. The Synoptists show — to say nothing at present of what the fourth gospel itself indicates — that St. Matthew could not possibly have been under the assumed misapprehension. As to ascribing the supposed error to a defect of memory, I have never heard or read of a reasonable theory of inspiration that would admit of that supposition, although Canon Farrar attributes the mistake of the Synoptists, in a measure, to that defect. If that element of human weakness enters essentially into a right idea of inspiration, it will be impossible to draw a line between the reliable and the unreliable, relatively to what is written on the so-called inspired page.

On the assumption of the mistake, there are revealed statements that must be ignored. He who adopts the conclusion must explain, consistently with his own view, our Lord's assertion, — for such, in effect, it was, — that at a particular time when He spoke, the Last Supper was designed by Him to be the actual Paschal meal. He must further explain how his view will stand with the fact, that our Lord kept the

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Passover in pursuance of that design, and unless we can ascribe error to Him, at the regular time.

We read in Matthew xxvi. 2, that Jesus, addressing His disciples, said, "Ye know that after two days is (the feast of) the Passover." The precise day on which this was spoken we cannot ascertain; but we know that it was before Peter and John were despatched on their mission. We know, further, that, after our Lord had informed, by His special messengers, the owner of the guest-chamber, in words that he, a Jew, could only understand in a Jewish sense, that He intended to keep *the Passover* at his house, He kept *the Passover* there. St. Luke (xxii. 15, 16) gives us our Lord's words uttered at the Last Supper, declaring, in terms entirely unqualified, that He was then actually keeping *the Passover*.

That St. John had actual knowledge that our Lord kept that very feast is placed beyond question by St. Luke, whilst the fact that St. John possessed that knowledge is confirmed by the circumstance *that he, writing when aware of the existence of St. Luke's statement, has sanctioned it by his silence respecting it*. This is a point of importance in my view of the case before me, and therefore I shall look at it somewhat closely. St. Luke wrote (xxii. 7): "Then came the day of unleavened bread *when the passover must be killed*." Why was this introduced into the Evangelist's narrative? It has no intelligible aspect, unless the object of the writer was to indicate that the thing necessary to be done on the day named was required, *in order to something else that was to be mentioned as a purport of the narrative*. Mention of this last follows immediately, in the very next verse. And what is it? "And he sent Peter and John,"—*the two most eminent of the twelve*—"saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat." "To prepare *the passover*" could, under the circumstances, have but one meaning, namely, to procure and kill, within the temple precincts, according to the ritual, *the passover lamb* referred to in the seventh verse. This was done, for St. Luke tells us in verse 13, "and they" (Peter and John)

"made ready *the passover*." It is absolutely certain, therefore, what the mission of Peter and John was, and the very fact is really, of itself, conclusive to show that the regular Jewish Passover was kept by our Lord. We gather, moreover, from the narratives, that the lamb and the cup of wine, two ingredients of the Paschal feast, were before Jesus when He eat the Last Supper.

When our Lord addressed to the twelve, St. John being one of them, the words, "*Ye know* that after two days is the feast of *the passover*," all who heard His address would understand a reference, not to a "quasi passover," — an idea excluded by the facts of the case — but to the regular Jewish Feast. When He superadded the words, "and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified," He referred to matters within their common knowledge *as things to be*. When they saw the happening of the two events simultaneously* — as they all witnessed it — they had before their eyes the full accomplishment of the subject and the predicate of our Lord's address, — "the day of *the passover*" and "the delivery up of the Son of man." St. John, therefore, knew that our Lord kept the Jewish Passover, and it is inconceivable that he could entertain a doubt as to its being celebrated at the proper time. No evidence exists to show that the slightest intimation was ever given to him, that when our Lord eat the Last Supper He was observing a Feast substituted for the Jewish Passover.

It will appear, presently, that when Jesus kept the last passover, He regarded the type as designed by Him to be fulfilled, primarily and in part, by an act of His enemies that would necessarily lead to His death, but ultimately and completely, in that kingdom where the assembled disciples were to celebrate another feast, and, under very different circumstances "to eat and to drink at our Lord's table." It was to a then future passover, in that kingdom, that our Lord referred — St John being present — when, after having said, "With desire I have desired to eat *this passover* with you before I suffer," (such is a true version of the Greek; with conjectural Aramaic.

——*See p. 12, l. 2.

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we have no concern) He added, "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat *thereof* until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Was it a "*quasi* passover" of which He thus spoke? Did St. John, into whose ears and heart these words had entered from the lips of his Lord, and in whose memory they could not but have dwelt while memory lasted, *deliberately purpose to disabuse Christian minds of an erroneous impression that Jesus observed the Jewish Passover?*

Canon Farrar, with his usual eloquence, has written of "memories of joy and sorrow strangely blended" in the Last Supper. The idea is based on an interesting truth, for all the "sorrow" connected with the ancient feast — which was then in a few hours to be realised *in fact* — was, and we shall see *of design*, fulfilled *virtually* on earth, on that very Jewish day on which the Last Supper was eaten; the "joy" awaits its fulfilment and consummation until the celebration of "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in "the kingdom of heaven." This is the only passover that Jesus *anticipated* in His last earthly festival.

I have now, as I think, prepared the way for asking the question stated at the head of my paper: Have we sufficient evidence for believing that, when St. John wrote his gospel, he had a deliberate purpose of correcting the assumed error of the Synoptists? The assumption, as stated by Canon Farrar, implies that St. John, not only perceived the error, but that he considered it of a nature sufficiently grave to require him to disabuse the world of it. The assumption, in view of all the facts, *necessarily* supposes an intention in his mind to correct a misapprehension on the part of his Lord. To me it is patent from a view of his narrative, read with the three other narratives, that the Apostle did not entertain any such design as Canon Farrar supposes.

It is certain, first, that the purpose assumed would be opposed to what St. John knew to be the truth; and, secondly, that, had he entertained it, he would have accomplished it by words that would have conveyed to every mind of ordinary

intelligence, with certainty, his own conviction, that, while the Synoptists had written under an impression that the Paschal Meal was eaten with the Last Supper, *the fact was not so*. When Canon Farrar wrote "St. John *silently* but deliberately corrected, &c.," he wrote, as it seems to me, that which involves a contradiction in the nature of things, as well as in terms.

I am not prepared to believe, in view of the whole truth possessed by St. John, that he, with the fact before his eyes, that he had been represented by St. Luke to have been sent, with Peter, by our Lord, commissioned to say to the owner of the guest-chamber "where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat *the passover* with my disciples?" and "to prepare *the passover*," nevertheless deliberately permitted that statement, with the antecedent, the accompanying and the subsequent circumstances detailed in connection with it, to stand in the Synoptist reports unchallenged and unnoticed, and so left it to convey forever an erroneous impression!

The state of the facts of the case imperatively, then, demands, that the concurrent views of the Synoptists must be regarded as beyond question; and that if there be, *as many very learned men think there is not*, an essential variance between the three first Gospel narratives and the fourth, some means must be sought for of accommodating the report of St. John in the points of difference to the narratives of the other three Evangelists. We know what constructions have been put on St. John's words with a view to a harmony of all the narratives. Some of those have been accepted by competent judges, as not necessarily involving violence to any statement in the Gospels, nor to any established fact or circumstance in Jewish or other history. If there were a discrepancy, it would be wiser, perhaps, to leave it as it is, than to try to get rid of it by a hypothesis that the facts of the case will not support.

To my mind a view of St John's Gospel is suggested which, although it will not remove all difficulties, will, in the matter of the seeming discrepancy, present his narrative as not necessarily inconsistent with those of the Synoptists.

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Before stating it, I would observe, that the following principle of construction ought to govern the case before us: If, in relation to four documents of equal authority, it be found that one of them shows an apparent discrepancy between it and the other three, the former should not be construed according to the strictest rules of literary criticism, with a view to support its variant readings, but its construction should if possible, be such, as without doing violence to language, will bring it into harmony with the latter. The propriety of adopting that rule in this case will appear, if we observe the way in which some commentators have dealt, in contrast with the way in which others have dealt and are now dealing with the text of John xiii. 1. The former have read that verse strictly, as it would properly be read if it stood alone. They have supposed it to refer to a day anterior to that on which the feast that is the subject of the chapter is stated to have been kept, the Greek preposition with the noun that it governs being understood to mean *before the day of the feast*. But the latter have considered a point of time to be imported, immediately antecedent to that when our Lord is related to have risen from the reclined posture first assumed by Him at the supper table.

Having regard to the rule indicated, the whole chapter may be read, consistently with all that we find in the four narratives and all that we know of the Jewish ceremonial law, as considering the word "feast," occurring in it, to have exclusive reference to the Last Supper and to the Jewish Passover observed simultaneously therewith. Omitting the parenthetical portions, the chapter may be read, and to prevent inconsistency with the Synoptic narrative *must be read* thus: "Now, before the feast of the passover began, when supper was prepared, and, after Jesus had reclined at the couch, He riseth from supper" (and so on, to the end). While proposing thus to read it, I have not overlooked the words "against the feast" of the twenty-ninth verse, which all the old commentators probably understood to refer to a feast of the passover to take place on

the then following Jewish day. So long as they considered the words "the feast of the passover" occurring in the first verse, to have no reference to the Last Supper, it was natural to construe the words "against the feast" of the twenty-ninth verse in the same sense; but when for the sake of harmony, it is found necessary to read the word "feast" of the first verse as importing a feast identical, as to time of celebration, with the Last Supper, it would seem to follow that the word "feast" of the other verse should have the same construction. Moreover, as I think it will appear, the context of the latter verse shows such to be its natural meaning. No difficulty in adopting it relatively to the Greek language, is presented. St John's words in the original are equivalent to the Latin words "in festum." Neither "ad diem festum" of the Vulgate, nor "against the"—in expectation of the—"feast" of our version, is a necessary reading.

Let those who suppose a reference to a future feast, look at the then surrounding circumstances. The hour was "night." It is not reasonable to suppose that our Lord's words addressed to Judas suggested to the mind of one of the twelve then present, he being, alike, ignorant of Judas's purpose and of Jesus' knowledge of it,—that Judas was sent out, *in the night*, to buy something that would not be required before the close of the following natural day: But it is reasonable, that a surmise should have arisen in the breast of that disciple, on hearing the words "that thou doest, *do quickly*," to the effect, that Judas was despatched, in order that he might go out and purchase "quickly" some thing supposed by the hearer of the words to have been perceived by our Lord to be wanting, or likely to be required, for that feast, then in its second course, and which was to continue for a considerable period. The lamb, and, no doubt, the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs were there; but there existed nothing which would preclude a supposition, that Jesus had observed or anticipated a deficiency of some other things, that were not unusual subordinate ingredients of a Jewish passover feast. It must be borne in

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mind, too, that since, as has been shown, St. John could not have been ignorant that our Lord, when He addressed Judas, was actually celebrating the Jewish Passover, he could not have intended, when he wrote the words in question, to *recognise a passover to be kept on the following Jewish day, as a regular festival*. All considerations as to what the Jewish law would allow or prohibit to be bought at the time, are beside the question—especially in relation to what must have been in the mind of the disciple who regarded the admonition to Judas, for he well knew what would be the effect of "the Master hath need," if the assumed messenger had been charged to use that phrase, and how the ass's colt and the guest-chamber had been procured.

Very learned commentators have felt grave perplexities to attend an exegesis of St. John's Gospel, in the points of inquiry. If my rationale of interpretation of his narrative, in relation to the question of identity or otherwise of the Last Supper with the Paschal Meal, in those passages that notice the acts and sentiments of the Jews, can be accepted as satisfactory, those perplexities will be lessened. In stating that rationale, I cannot but deal with as established truths, or as corollaries therefrom, first, that Jesus designed to keep the Passover in question at what He knew to be the proper time; secondly, that that time was known by every one of the twelve; thirdly, that our Lord kept the Passover in accordance with His design; fourthly, that every one of the twelve knew that He did so.

I assume that the Jewish Council, and the Jews generally, during the whole period between the commencement of the Last Supper and the death of Jesus, did design to keep in accordance with their law, the feast of the Passover, but that, from some miscalculations or misconceptions, they erroneously observed it on the evening which succeeded that when Jesus correctly kept the same feast—a mistake of theirs that would probably have been shared by St. John, if he had not been set right by our Lord. Observe now, in view of this, that from

the moment when Jesus was in the custody of the Jewish Band, more especially when St. John wrote, the question of accuracy or inaccuracy of the Jews as to the time, *had ceased, and forever to have any, the slightest interest for Christians.* I can, therefore, understand how what St. John wrote respecting acts and impressions of the Jews, can be explained, without any contradiction between his knowledge and his statements being involved in his narrative. No reason existed for his correcting the misapprehension of the Jews in those respects. He therefore contented himself with noticing their conduct, and the reasons which he knew to have influenced it, so far as the purposes of his narrative required, *and that, without any comment.* In the light of this the Synoptists may also be read.

As regards those passages in St. John's Gospel where he seems to express, independently of the Jews, his own sentiments, as for instance, "And it was the preparation of the passover," it is sufficient to remark, that men of great intellects, high culture and exact scholarship, seeing that there exist three independent concurring narratives of equal authority with the fourth Gospel, which deal with the same subject, read, and most properly, St. John in the light of those narratives, and interpret him accordingly. How they have done this everybody knows. That they have done so satisfactorily under all the circumstances, most men of intelligence feel and acknowledge.

While contemplating the events of our Lord's life, as briefly stated by St. Matthew, that happened between the close of His discourse, suggested by the stones of the Temple, and His arrest by the Jews, I draw two inferences, that seem to me important, as indicating motives which influenced His utterances and His acts, during that period. A key to these is furnished by Matt. xxvi. 2 and verse 20 of that chapter. I read these verses, of course, in the light of all the narratives and of Jewish type and prophecy. It appears to me that we have indicated, first, the particular manner in which, relatively to the impending Sacrifice, Jesus designed to appear to the twelve:

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as the anti-type of the Paschal Lamb; secondly, certain special objects to which He made that design subservient. There would seem to have been in that Divine breast, at the time referred to, a motive and a purpose that might be thus expressed: Our Lord foresaw that the period to commence with His arrest and end with His death would be one of great excitement, while it would be marked by an entire abandonment of Himself by all the disciples, save Peter and John. He determined, therefore, to employ the calm interval between His sitting down to the Last Supper and the arrival of the Jewish Guard, in accomplishing the double purpose of instituting the great Christian Feast, and of delivering the discourse related by St. John. He observed the Jewish festival at what He knew to be the proper time. But He determined, while fulfilling in the feast all of type and prophecy that had been foreshadowed, to regard, *for the purpose of fulfilment*, "the delivery up to be slain" of the Lamb of God, as the actual Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, that was shortly to succeed it.

And was there no "inherent and symbolical fitness" in this? I apprehend there was, and one more real and significant than that supposed by a popular writer of the present day, in relation to the time of the actual Sacrifice. Here, we should bear in mind the obvious fact, that the Passover Feast could not, in the nature of things, have been kept by our Lord simultaneously with the very Sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Was there not in the pre-arrangement assumed, when regarded in the light of Genesis, xxii., a correspondence between type and anti-type? There we learn, that a short, but definite interval elapsed between the binding of Isaac for sacrifice, and the actual Sacrifice of the provided Lamb.

Now recall the words of Matt. xxvi. 2 "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and"—and then—"the Son of Man is *delivered up to be crucified*." There we have the predetermined design indicated. In verse 20 of the same chapter we read: "Now, when even was come, He sat down with the twelve." There begins the accomplishment of

that purpose of which the conclusion was the "delivering up of the Son of Man"—an event that took place before the following day dawned on that Passover night. We may note, also, "the hour is come," and the frequent recurrence of the word "now" in John xvii; the use of the present tense by Jesus at the institution of the Eucharist, as related in the other narratives, while these last show the word "passover" to have been often on the lips of our Lord, and always used without any qualification to intimate that it was not used in its natural, Jewish sense. All these circumstances harmonize with the design of Jesus that I have assumed. In connection with them observe especially, Luke xxii. 15, noting and emphasizing the words "before I suffer." The idea of anticipation by our Lord of the regular time for keeping the passover is, not only no where intimated, but it is inconsistent with His own words and acts.

It will be perceived that I have not confined myself to the subject proposed at the commencement of my paper. I have found some of its incidents so full of interest, that I could not refrain from briefly adverting to them, though I fear that what I have observed in relation to them is unworthy of the sacred theme on which I have meditated.

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